

VOICES ISRAEL
GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2024





VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

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Art of the month

**Judy Robinson's Painting
on the front cover and Judy
Belsky's artwork on page
10**

This month's Essays

***Faithfully Seeking Franz* by
Elana Wolff on page 11
and
Poetry as Method by Mara
Lee Grayson on page 12**

Aphorism of the Month

**Poetry slows down the
world.**

**from Simon Constam,
author of Daily Ferocity, on
Instagram**



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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear Friends,

It's been a busy month for us all, and a challenging one for all of Israel, but with the holiday season now finished we can hopefully find more time for writing poetry. The holiday season might be over, but sadly, the war isn't. We wait anxiously for news of the release of the hostages and the safe return of our soldiers who put their lives on the line to protect us. Regrettably, because of the current security situation, we had to postpone the workshop 'Poem under Construction', scheduled to be in Netanya on 30th October. This workshop will be rearranged for a day, hopefully in the near future, when it's completely safe for us all to travel. A great big thank you to our Workshop Coordinator, Elana Dorfman, who managed to arrange another workshop for 30th October at very short notice, and to Eli Ben-Joseph who led it. Eli's workshop 'Emily Dickinson's Inspiration' focused on this poet's multi-themed early modern poetry. It's an education to listen to every sentence that Eli says – he is so knowledgeable and interesting on whatever subject he speaks. The workshop was much appreciated by all 28 members who participated. Judy Koren has kindly agreed to produce a pdf Chapbook with the resulting poems submitted.

The submission period for the Reuben Rose Competition has now closed. 200 poems have been submitted by members and non-members and the poems are being assessed by the competition judges. It was a little disappointing that there were fewer entries this year than in previous years, but hopefully that means the results will be available sooner.

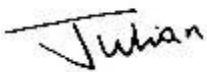
The Bar Sagi poetry prize for youngsters aged 12-18 will begin its submission period in the middle of this month and we would like to ask you to spread the word among English teachers you may know, schools you are familiar with and any friends and acquaintances who have contact with teens who might like to submit their poems. Details for submission to this year's prize will be on our website very soon.

In the last Newsletter I noted that Dina Jehuda is standing down as Editor-in-Chief of the Anthology. Judy Koren has stepped up to take over from Dina – a very tough act to follow – but one which I know Judy will fulfil equally well. See the announcement later in the Newsletter (page 8).

Since joining Voices Israel, Miriam (my wife) and I have noted just how caring our members are for the welfare of others. Chanita, our esteemed treasurer, welcomes new members to the 'Voices family'. And Voices Israel is just that – a caring and loving family – we're happy for each other when there are happy events to celebrate and we're there for each other when someone isn't well or there are sad tidings. It's my great pleasure to offer Mazal Tov congratulations to Susan Rosenberg, who I believe, is the oldest member of this family. Susan is about to celebrate her hundredth birthday, and we all wish her continued health and happiness until at least 120. See Wendy Blumfield's tribute further on in this Newsletter (page 6), and also a set of poems for and by Susan.

Have a good and fruitful month,

Kind regards,



Julian Alper,
President, Voices Israel.

EDITOR'S NOTES

This month's edition includes artwork from Judy Robinson and Judy Belsky and essays by Mara Lee Grayson and Elana Wolff. We welcome submissions of your art and essays for future Newsletters, please e-mail to newsletter.voices@gmail.com or telephone 054-307-3587 to discuss.

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MEETING DATES, TIMES AND PLACES - NOVEMBER 2024

SOUTHERN Meeting via Zoom Sunday, November 24 at 5:00 PM Coordinator: Miriam Green miriamsgreen@gmail.com	TEL AVIV Meeting via Zoom Thursday, November 21 at 7:00 PM Coordinator: Mark L. Levinson Mobile: 054-444-8438 nosnivel@netvision.net.il	JERUSALEM Meeting via Zoom Wednesday, November 27 At 7:30 PM Coordinator: Avril Meallem Tel: 02-567-0998 aemeallem@gmail.com	UPPER GALILEE Wednesday, November 13 at 10:30 AM at the home of Reuven and Yehudit. 128 Keren HaYesod Artists Quarter, Tzfat Coordinator: Reuven Goldfarb Tel: 04-697-4105 Mobile: 058-414-0262 poetsprogress@gmail.com
HAIFA Tuesday, November 26 at 7:00 PM at Wendy Blumfield's home Contact Naomi Yalin for details Coordinator: Naomi Yalin Mobile: 054-794-3738 naomiyalin@gmail.com	NETANYA/SHARON Monday, November 25 at 7:00 PM at Susan Olsburgh's home 2/6 Zalman Shazar, 3rd floor Ramat Poleg Coordinator: Susan Olsburgh Mobile: 054-919-3575 olsburgh.susan@gmail.com	GLOBAL GROUP 1 Meeting via Zoom Thursday, November 7 At 19:30 Israel time Coordinator: Shoshana Kent Mobile: +972-52-808-9365 y2nosh@gmail.com	GLOBAL GROUP 2 Meeting via Zoom Tuesday, November 19 At 19:00 Israel time Coordinator: Judy Koren Mobile: +972-54-741-7860 koren.judy@gmail.com

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REFUAH SHELEIMAH

We wish *refuah sheleimah*, best wishes for a full and speedy recovery, to Ruth Fogelman. Please keep Ruth (Rut bat Chana) in your thoughts and prayers.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR MEMBERS

- To - **Isaac Cohen**, for his many successes this last month.
- To - **Elana Wolff**, the recipient of the 2024 Canadian Jewish Literary Award for her Kafka-quest work, **FAITHFULLY SEEKING FRANZ**, in the category of Thought and Culture. See Elana's essay [here](#).
- To - **Michael Stone**, who has been Honored with Armenia's Presidential Medal of Gratitude – see announcement [here](#).
- To - **Klarina Priborkin** – whose book of poetry in Hebrew, 'The Salt of the Earth', was recently published and is available for purchase [here](#).
- To - **Wendy Dickstein**, whose poem 'Shalom Zachor' is included in the October 2024 edition of the Jewish Literary Journal – you can read it [here](#).
- To - **Miriam Jaskierowicz Arman**, whose poem 'The Sea' was the poetry prize winner in the Euro Mediterranean (Italy) Academy of Arts.
- To - **Klarina Priborkin, Bob Findysz and Julian Alper**, who have each had three poems selected for publication in the arc 31 journal of the IAWE (Israel Association of Writers in English).
- To - **Wendy Blumfield** – who has had a short story accepted for publication in the arc 31 journal of the IAWE (Israel Association of Writers in English) and an article on a health centre for refugees in Haifa in the Jerusalem Report (you can read it [here](#)).
- To - **Stanley Barkan, Silvia Kofler, Bob Mwangi, Judy Koren and Julian Alper**, who have had poems selected for the KEL29, Korean-English literary journal.
- To - **Miriam Green**, who has had three of her poems in the Mid-Atlantic Review as part of their special section on The Jewish Experience – you can read the poems [here](#).

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SUSAN ROSENBERG HITS THE CENTURY – BY WENDY BLUMFIELD

Voices Israel is delighted to celebrate the 100th birthday of our veteran poet, Susan Rosenberg.

We in the Haifa branch have been privileged to enjoy her grace, her good humour and her beautiful poetry for many years. Only recently did she move to Jerusalem to be near her family.

Susan joined Voices in 1978. She was Voices Secretary from 2001-2011. At that time the monthly newsletter was typed on one side of a foolscap sheet, with poems from members on the other. Susan had the gift of squeezing every item of news on to that page, even handwriting round the margins. When Voices decided to expand the possibilities and produce the newsletter online, Susan gave up the position but continued as Membership Secretary. And Susan was Voices Haifa Group co-ordinator for many years, managing the group with tact and efficiency.



SUSAN RETIRES FROM HER JOB AS HAIFA CO-ORDINATOR WITH A PARTY AT EDIT GAVRIELY'S HOME

Susan was famous for her gracious hospitality in her spacious home in Haifa and many successful workshops were held there.

Susan was also the founding President of the Haifa Chapter of Hadassah Women and she and her late husband Dick were involved in many community projects.

She always spoke about how much she had enjoyed being a mother of five children and she keeps count of all the grandchildren, great-grandchildren and even a great-great. Susan has experienced tragedy in her life: her youngest son John passed away from cancer; a year later John's son was on the way to the memorial and was killed in a car accident. Her beloved husband Dick had been disabled for some time, cared for by her and their devoted carer until he passed away. And on October 7th her granddaughter and husband were murdered in their Gaza kibbutz.

But Susan always shows optimism, has a bright smile and a good word for everybody. Even at Voices meetings, she would give a critique of a member's poem, but always in a positive and constructive way.

Susan has been published in most of the annual anthologies and also in her own several collections of poems. They are short and meaningful. The following poem written in 1978 expresses her gentle nature.

MEDITERRANEAN

Ooh! Buy me a dress
of soft grey crepe
with the sun shining on it;
let it slip gently
over my body
like the Mediterranean today

We wish Susan a wonderful birthday with her family and friends, good health, joy and love from all her fellow poets at Voices Israel.

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The Voices group poses for a photo at a workshop at Susan's home



Susan at a Nethanya workshop with other Haifa members



Chanukah: at anthology launching, Susan and her late husband Dick z"l light the candles.



Susan with Wendy and guest workshop leader David Caplan at her home.



At a 2017 workshop



Susan with Johnmichael Simon at a 2019 workshop

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ANTHOLOGY EDITOR

Dina Jehuda is standing down as Editor-in-Chief of the Voices Israel Anthology, a post she has filled excellently for very many years with great skill and dedication. There was just one nomination to replace her as Chief Editor - Judy Koren, our immediate Past President (who also, as it happens, designs and produces the physical volume of the Anthology). So starting with the 2025 Anthology, Judy will assume the role of Chief Editor. We wish her every possible success and we know that she will do a wonderful job for us. Thank you, Judy, for taking up the baton - and thank you Dina for all your hard work as Chief Editor.

CALLS FOR SUBMISSIONS

Extended deadline - The Israel Association of Writers in English (IAWE) - will be accepting submissions from citizens and residents of Israel for the 31st issue of *arc*, its annual literary journal, **until November 16, 2024**. The theme for *arc* 31 is "The Phoenix". "The Phoenix" is a theme with a very broad canvas to explore:

- We are looking for poems that make us sit up and take note.
- We are looking for language that is innovative, striking and imaginative.
- We are looking for insight, courage; a step out of your comfort zone to explore experiences that are personal and characterize our zeitgeist.

Please note: the Phoenix theme is entirely optional. Submissions may be off-theme.

The editor, Mike Stone, will consider original, unpublished poetry and short stories in English. You do not have to be a member of IAWE to submit your work.

Submission guidelines can be found [here](#).

The Jewish Literary Journal (a monthly online journal) seeks submissions of up to 5 poems (each poem being no more than 200 lines). If submitting multiple poems, submit only 1 (one) document containing all the poems. Each poem submitted should appear at the top of a new page. All submissions should be e-mailed to editors@jewishliteraryjournal.com – further details can be found [here](#).

Of The Book literary journal publishes fiction, non-fiction, and poetry from new and established voices.

Of The Book journal seeks to publish the best and most compelling prose, poetry, and literary translations by writers from around the world. All submissions must be original and not previously published in print or online, except in exceptional circumstances. **Poetry** submissions may include up to 10 pages of poetry, with one poem per page. Send your submissions to ofthebookpress@gmail.com. Further details can be found [here](#).

WRITE-HAUS online journal welcomes submissions of prose and poetry for a **SUNDAY SHOWCASE**. All pieces of writing must be submitted in English, and translations are encouraged! Submit up to five poems. Poems should be single-spaced, in Times New Roman font, and Microsoft Word or Google Docs, not PDF. If you are sending multiple poems, please include them all in the same document. The name of your file should include your full name. More details are [here](#).

Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies and Gender Issues (of Brandeis University) invites submissions of poems in English or in English translation and previously unpublished in English, responding to the events of October 7, 2023, and those that followed, in Israel and elsewhere. Selected poems will be published in a poetry supplement edited by Kathryn Hellerstein and Lisa Katz, in the Spring 2025 issue of NASHIM. We prefer to publish translated poems together with the poems in their original language. Please send poetry submissions to Nashim@schechter.ac.il by December 31, 2024. There are more details [here](#).

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Deronda Review Seeks Your War Poems

THE DERONDA REVIEW (www.derondareview.org), continues to accept poems for its page "Poems for Israel, October 2023," which now contains the work of more than 40 poets. The page is being updated as new poems come in, so scroll down to find the latest! Poems for posting on this page may be sent to derondareview@gmail.com.

Green Golem: The Zionist Literary Magazine

Green Golem is a new online Zionist literary magazine that is now open for submissions. Visit the Golem at <https://greengolemmag.com/>.



We're calling the project *Green Golem: The Zionist Literary Magazine*. The golem, a stone creature from Jewish mythology, is a symbol of Jewish innovation and self-defense. The color green represents Israel's farmers and kibbutzniks; Israel's green energy advancements; and the green uniforms of the IDF, who protect Israel today.

Green Golem will consider quality fiction, nonfiction, and poetry of any kind, but with special preference to works that include Jewish or Zionist elements; works that are set in the State of Israel; works by Jewish authors; works by Israeli authors of any faith; and works by U.S. and international authors who support Israel. Besides writing, we will also ask for submissions from painters, drawers, and other visual artists.

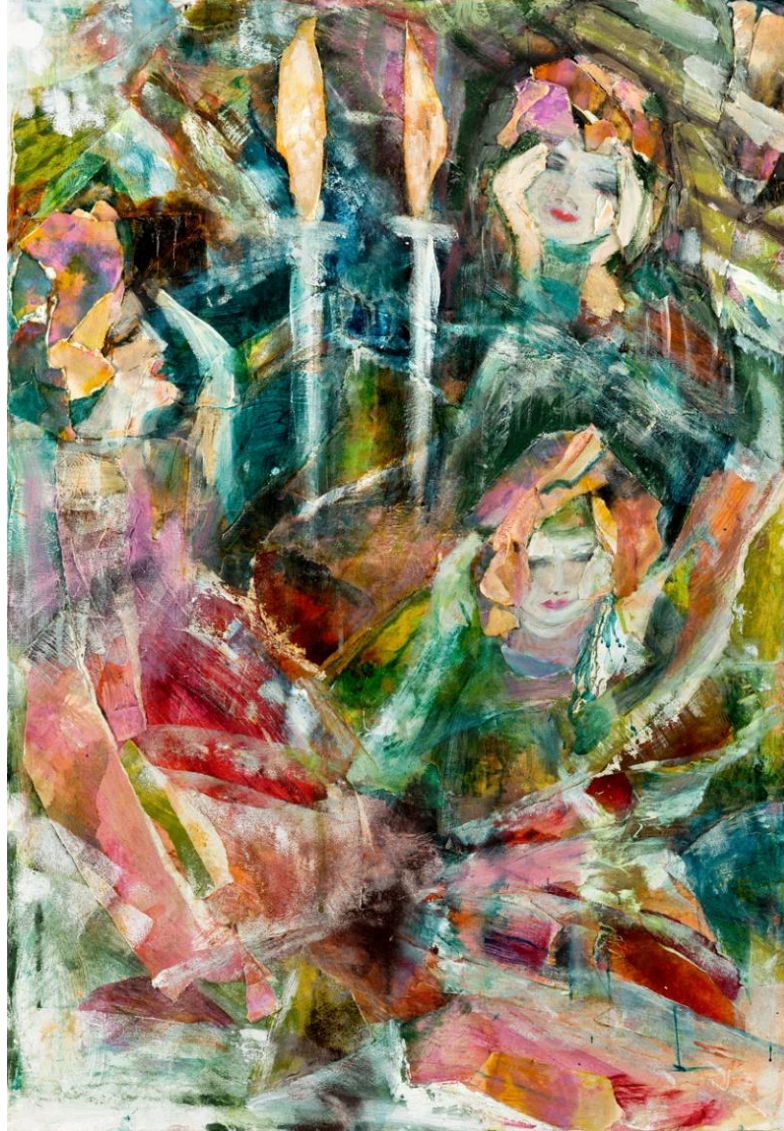
IAWE ANNOUNCEMENT

The **Israel Association of Writers in English** (IAWE) has just brought out the 16th issue of its quarterly newszine, *aChord*. To view or download the new issue of *aChord*, click [here](#).

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OUR MEMBERS' ART

Judy Belsky's - Bringing in the Light



This is a painting of three women lighting Shabbat candles. These might be three generations or any three women. The implication is a community of women bringing in Shabbat and spreading the light. It is a painting done on canvas in fluid acrylic with the addition of some collage paper to add depth and interest.

Judy Belsky

You can see more of Judy's Wonderful art on her web site <https://judybelsky.com/gallery>



Front cover - Yellow Flowers, Early Summer

The painting "Yellow Flowers, Early Summer," is an acrylic on canvas, 16"x20". Flowers have always been a favorite subject for me, both in painting and in poetry. The strong vibrant colors in this painting reflect the intensity of heat and light in summer.

Judy Robinson

You can see more of Judy's Wonderful art on her web site

<https://www.judithrobinson.com/paintings>

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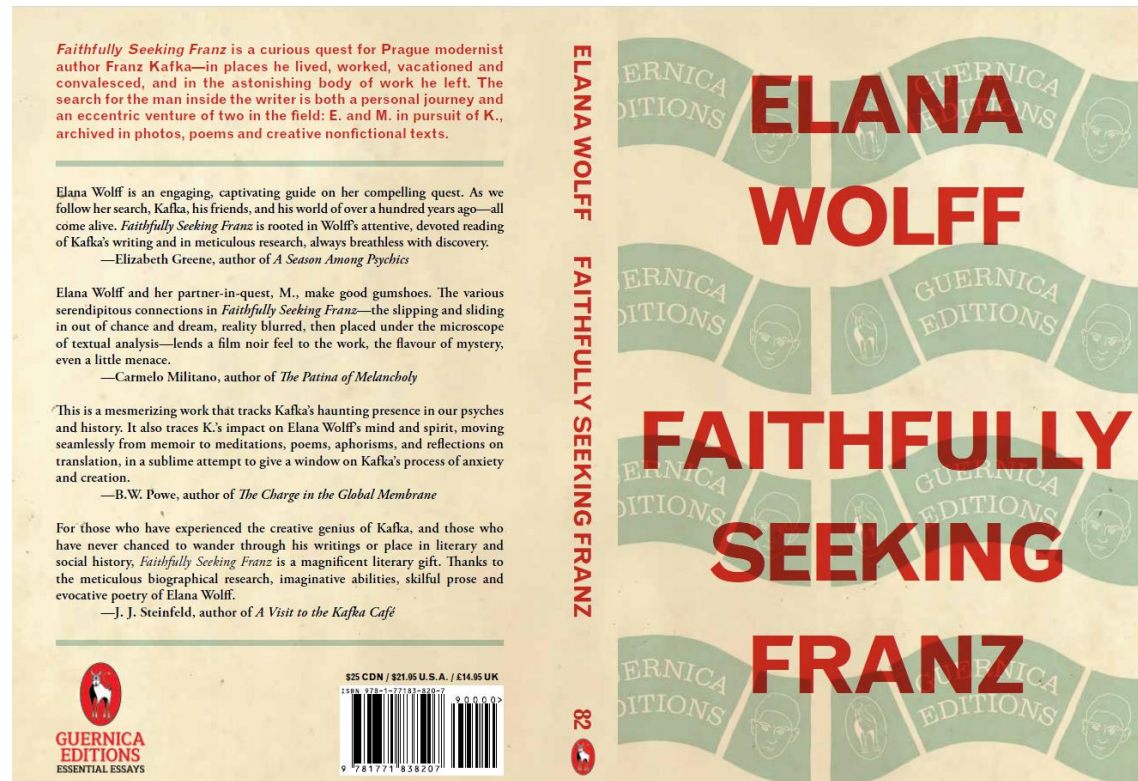
ESSAY - FAITHFULLY SEEKING FRANZ – ELANA WOLFF

I came to Prague modernist author Franz Kafka as an angsty teen—journeying on my own into the world by way of world literature. Kafka got into my head with *The Metamorphosis*, the mind-bending transformational story of Gregor Samsa—dependable son, brother, employee, and family champion who wakes up one morning in the body of a giant bug. A story based on a fantastical premise, soberly told and somehow seamlessly real. A protagonist troubled and troubling, yet eminently compelling. An inside-outsider I could relate to. I fell hard for a fictional anti-hero and his creator.

He's never really left me.

Kafka has come right up through the centre of my life. I pursued him first in his fiction—in translations (from German) of his stories and fragmentary novels. Then in his diaries and letters—his fictional themes of guilt, shame, strangeness, alienation, and contrary longings never very far from his biographical experience. When my own life permitted, almost fifteen years ago, I began tracking him in the field—seeking his traces in places he lived and worked, vacationed and convalesced; where he died and where he was laid to rest; M. my helpmate and foil.

I'd been seeking the man inside the writer long before I saw the search as building toward a book. The book—a cross-genre work—comprises mostly creative nonfiction stories; also poems, reflections, and documentary photographs. *Faithfully Seeking Franz* was released in fall of 2023, in wake of the Hamas attacks of October 7. A dark time for Am Israel, and, for me, also a difficult time to launch a book. I felt no enthusiasm for giving readings and presentations, though I was, and am, obligated to my publisher, Guernica Editions, to promote my book.



And I have been promoting, though less than I would be under different circumstances. And I continue to read, reread, and seek Kafka in the field—guided, as I am, by hints, hunches, and indications; open to being surprised by what might be just offroad, under a bridge, across a meadow, or down a hall. There's always the affirming frisson of a felt connection. There's disappointment too. But even letdowns and glitches can intimate the company of K.

The term Kafkaesque was coined to describe the kinds of bizarre, sometimes darkly humorous, more often vexatious and dehumanizing situations and events depicted in Kafka's writing, and active in the world. It's a useful term, and when real-life situations fit the descriptor, one feels the K. connection. Kafka was prescient and is with us still.

The darkness of October 7 has not lifted, but we have faith, hope, and resilience. There's no choice but to prevail, and there are many daily consolations—in family, with friends and community, and in art and literature. Yesterday, as I was drafting this piece for Voices Israel, I received notification that *Faithfully Seeking Franz* "was chosen as a laureate for a Canadian Jewish Literary Award for 2024." Kafka is with me still.

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ESSAY - POETRY AS METHOD - MARA LEE GRAYSON

Before I left a tenured faculty position for nonprofit earlier this year, I'd spent nearly 15 years teaching rhetoric and composition, trying to disavow college students of the inspiration myth, that is, the belief that good writing – however we define it – is the result of divine intervention, ideas and language floating down to the page in the arms of a muse or a deus ex machina lowered upon an ancient stage. Instead, I worked with my students to identify what worked for them: the ideas they wished to develop, the linguistic tools already at their disposal, the rhetorical skills they could refine, even a specific writing implement, setting, or ergonomics.

I encouraged my students to experiment with settings and set-ups and styles as they both figured out what was comfortable and expanded their repertoire. I've done the same. I wrote half my first book on an eyestrain-inducing laptop in hotel lobbies during a summer off, while traveling with my husband for his work. I finished my dissertation by sitting for eight hours a day at a worn-down desk in a room with heavy carpet, poor lighting, a closed door, and the early seasons of *Grey's Anatomy* on Netflix at low volume. I've written research, scholarship, short fiction, personal essay. I was a theatre critic for a newspaper; I ran a cooking blog.

But again and again, I return to poetry, and the reason is one that may disappoint my rhetoric and composition colleagues who decry the inspiration myth: when it comes to poetry, there's a part of me that believes in magic.

*

I was born into the tensions between political commitment and aesthetic experience. My father was a Method actor, then a stage director. His father designed jewelry and, in the early 1950s, held the first patent for a coin-operated television set. (He let the patent expire, someone else sold the idea, I could have been the Coin-a-Vision heiress, and I am still bitter.) My mother was a city caseworker and an activist. Her father was a union steward and a Spanish Civil War soldier. My mother taught me to have purpose; my father taught me to have feeling.

*

On page 20 of David Baddiel's *The God Desire* is an equation: "desire + invisibility = God."

I generally skew toward skepticism. I've never felt connected to a father figure God, but I understand that the concept feels deeply real for the majority of people in the world. Having taught and practiced yoga for most of my life, I still feel false reciting Sanskrit chants – it's not my language, not my culture to appropriate – but I trust the neurobiological benefits of meditation. I believe the mind possesses the potential for more than our minds currently conceive, but I don't know how we'd ever measure that which goes beyond our capacities for measurement.

I know what inspiration feels like, and I desire poetic inspiration. Intellectually or psychologically, my desire plus my inability to identify or define *inspiration* may confirm its nonexistence and the fallaciousness of the inspiration myth. From another perspective, it doesn't matter. I desire inspiration, even if it is a projection.

The poems I've written that mean the most to me are usually those that, if asked to explain them, I would have the weakest handle on. For example, I didn't realize there was a feminist narrative in what I call my [cow poem](#) until an editor mentioned it to me. I see it now, but it wasn't a conscious choice. I just saw a cow one day, this beautiful creature with wide eyes and auburn fur, pressed into a too-small space on a trailer that exited the freeway toward a slaughterhouse. I was crying in the car, thinking about the cows I saw during summers on the mountain in Vermont when I was a child, and the car my parents drove up from our house in Brooklyn, and images cascaded down onto my notebook.

At least I think that's what happened. I don't really *want* to analyze how I created that poem. I can talk to students and fellow poets about how I revised, edited, and refined it once it existed, but those first few images and lines? They came to me and I laid them on the page.

I write poems in cars, on trains, in planes. I pull a palm-sized notebook from my purse in bars, restaurants, and family dinners. I voice record lines into my phone. These bursts of inspiration may be bursts I've invited, cultivated, opened myself up to through decades of disciplined writing. But they don't feel that way, and isn't that felt sense part of what distinguishes cognition from belief?

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Maybe the reason poetry challenges my assumptions about process and my theories of composition is I expect it to. But I want the god magic of poetry, placebo or not.

*

Rhetoric isn't only about persuasion; it is also about the ways that we make meaning. Often when we think of rhetoric, we direct attention outward rather than inward to the self. Beneath the impulse to understand or change others, however, lies a deeper need, more difficult to satisfy: *Understand me*, it says. *Accept me*.

Maybe that's why I need poetry. Or maybe it's that, as I told a friend in college, it's because poetry is about the moment. I suppose I still think that: Poetry exists within a single moment that carries an entire life.

In this way, even if rhetoric informs my methodology and the lens through which I see the world, poetry is how I investigate my past and how I make it present.

As a poet, I'm both actor and director, and the page becomes the diorama, storyboard, and stage. It is a world I create by immersion, for immersion's sake, from which I can later step back and understand anew, not unlike the way becoming someone else makes an actor somehow more himself.

When I write a poem, I can be the me at 23 who curled beneath my first love's spastic arm in his hospital bed, who laughed at the TV and temporarily forgot about the frailty of his body or her own, or their future. And I can be the woman watching her sixteen years later, who knows how it ends and loves the moment just the same.

I can find meaning in the mania and narcissism my mother subjected me to when I was a child.

I can write myself to Rome, where my palms caressed the Colosseum's stones, hot sun pressed down on my back, and I stared into a pit where people not my ancestors once reveled orgiastically in violence, more overt but not so different from the way we do today. I can make the bloodstains visible so my stomach turns. I can promise gods I don't believe in that I'll do my part to bring more peace into the world.

When I write a poem, I can build an arm of language to hold onto.

I can hear my husband say he loves me the first time.

I can write my father back to life.

If you've ever been consumed by love or grief or longing, can you really tell me poetry isn't magic?

SPECIAL OFFERS

Johnmichael Simon is offering his **chapbook design services** to Voices Israel members and friends.

If you would like to possess a beautifully presented and published collection of your own favorite poems, please contact Johnmichael for details of this special offer at johnmichaelsimon@gmail.com.

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